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C O N F I D E N T I A L CARACAS 000067

SIPDIS

SOUTHCOM ALSO FOR POLAD

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SUBJECT: MOROCCO CLOSING EMBASSY DUE TO CHAVEZ'S POLISARIO
AFFINITY

Classified By: A/Political Counselor Daniel Lawton,
Reason 1.4 (d)

¶1. (SBU) Summary. Morocco announced its plans to close its Caracas embassy and relocate to the Dominican Republic via a terse January 15 press release carried widely in the Venezuelan media. The Moroccans cited Venezuela's "growing hostility" to Moroccan territorial integrity and recent measures by the Chavez administration "to support the phony Saharan Arab Democratic Republic SADR)" (the POLISARIO guerrillas' self-declared nation in Western Sahara). End Summary.

¶2. (C) Moroccan DCM Haddawi (strictly protect) told Poloff January 16 that there was not a specific event leading to Morocco's decision to close its Caracas embassy. He did, however, mention the unconfirmed internet report that Hector Michel Mujica, Venezuela's ambassador to Algeria had recently presented credentials to the SADR. When appointed in September 2008, the official gazette of the National Assembly naming Mujica as Ambassador to Algeria and to serve concurrently as non-resident Ambassador to the SADR.

¶3. (C) The SADR representative in Venezuela pre-dates President Chavez going back several years. Chavez received the credentials of the latest SADR representative, Omar Emboririk Ahmed, as well as those of nine ambassadors from recognized nations, in August 2008 ceremony. Haddawi said he did not know when the Moroccan embassy would cease operations, noting that moving an entire diplomatic mission could take months. The Algerian and Moroccan missions issued a series of pointed diplomatic memos late last year stating their conflicting positions regarding Western Sahara and copied all diplomatic missions in Caracas.

¶4. (C) Comment. This latest local international controversy is another example of Chavez's affection for armed revolutionary movements such as the POLISARIO and the FARC. End Comment.
CAULFIELD